

VZCZCXRO3134

RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN
RUEHLZ RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSK RUEHSL RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAH #0851/01 1881130

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 071130Z JUL 09

FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3103
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3133
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5405
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2998
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3649
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3697
RHMCSSU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000851

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, IIP, ECA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PGOV SCUL KPAO TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MEDIA REACTION ON JUNE POST EVENTS

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: June saw media provide generally accurate and favorable coverage of U.S. government and post conducted events in Turkmenistan. The U.S. Department of Energy-organized workshop on pipeline integrity and management held June 10-11 received large accurate state and international media coverage. USAID projects in Turkmenistan also received accurate and timely coverage with sources mostly referring to Post-issued press releases. The Turkmen edition of Turkish newspaper "Zaman" carried a message of congratulations from the Charge d'affaires on the occasion of the President of Turkmenistan's birthday. Media also largely highlighted the official visit of Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister, Rashid Meredov, to the United States. At the end of month, interview remarks by a U.S. embassy intern at the International Exhibition of World Art Masterpieces were carried on state media. END SUMMARY.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY-ORGANIZED WORKSHOP RECEIVES WIDE MEDIA COVERAGE

¶3. (U) On June 10, pro-government website "Turkmenistan.ru" (Russian, English) accurately reported in brief on the pipeline workshop, drawing from Post-issued press release material. On the next day, it posted another article on the event carrying accurate interview remarks made by U.S. Department of Energy Department for Russian and Eurasian Issues Deputy Director Meryl Burpoe. On June 10, the government-run website "Turkmenistan Golden Age" (www.turkmenistan.gov.tm) (Turkmen, Russian and English) posted an interview article on the event, which also included accurate remarks by Meryl Burpoe. The interview stressed the willingness of U.S. companies to cooperate with Turkmenistan in diversification of its energy exports. The same article appeared on front pages of state-run dailies "Neutral Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 47,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 36,091) the next day. The dailies also ran separate articles on the event, and carried accurate opening remarks by U.S. Charge d'Affaires Richard Miles. "Watan" TV evening news program's (Turkmen) June 11 broadcast also highlighted the event with a similar story run by state dailies, also including an accurate interview with Burpoe.

¶4. (U) On June 12, state-run dailies "Neutral Turkmenistan" and "Turkmenistan" carried an accurate follow-up story, highlighting the closing of the workshop. The same day, regional weekly newspaper

"Ahal Durmushy" (Turkmen, circ. 40,091), in reference to state dailies, also ran an accurate article. On June 12, "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) hourly news program carried a short piece highlighting the event. On June 14, the same channel carried a separate broader program about the workshop, which included interview remarks by Meryl Burpoe and representatives of participating companies. On June 13, the Turkmenistan edition of the Turkish newspaper "Zaman-International" (Turkmen, circ. 34,100) posted an accurate article on the event.

¶15. (U) On June 10-12, U.S.-based website "EurasiaNet" (English), Russian news agency "ITAR-TASS" (Russian), "RIA OREANDA" (English), "Interfax: Russia & CIS General Newswire" (English), Azeri news agency "Trend" (Russian), "Kazakhstan Newsline" (English), "The Times of Central Asia" (English) and Kyrgyzstan based "CA-NEWS" (Russian) carried accurate stories highlighting the workshop. Most of the coverage was based on state media reporting and a Post-issued press release. On June 12, "Reuters" (English) posted an accurate story, highlighting an interview with Meryl Burpoe, who expressed the strong interest of U.S. companies to participate in energy projects in Turkmenistan. A similar but shorter article was posted on "Asia Pulse" (English) on June 15. On June 17, "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty" website posted an accurate article referring to a statement made by the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Officer that the United States is not competing for Turkmen gas.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT USAID-IMPLEMENTED PROJECTS IN JUNE

¶16. (U) On June 10, Azeri "Trend News Agency" (English, Russian) and the opposition website "Gundogar" (English, Russian) reprinted a

ASHGABAT 00000851 002 OF 003

Post press release about a USAID-sponsored workshop on HIV prevention in Turkmenistan. On June 16, the "US Fed News" (English) reprinted Post's press release on continued USAID support of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in Turkmenistan. USAID presented Russian translations of IFRS to the Supreme Council of Science and Technology of Turkmenistan. On June 16, Russian "RIA OREANDA" (English) carried an accurate story on local governance roundtable, organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Institute of Democracy and Human Rights of Turkmenistan and U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat.

¶17. (U) On June 24, state-run dailies "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 46,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 36,091) and pro-government website "Turkmenistan.ru" (Russian, English) ran accurate stories highlighting an opening of a USAID-supported project, the first drop-in center for drug addicts in Ashgabat. On the same day, Kyrgyzstan-based "CA-NEWS" (Russian) reprinted the Post-issued press release on this event. In subsequent days, "The Times of Central Asia" (English) and Russian "RIA OREANDA" (English) carried short articles on the event. On June 26, "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 46,091) ran another longer article on the center's opening and accurately quoted the USAID Country Director on cooperation in drug prevention in Turkmenistan. (NOTE: Most coverage on USAID events heavily drew from post press releases or state media reporting. END NOTE.)

TURKISH NEWSPAPER IN TURKMENISTAN CARRIES U.S. CHARGE D'AFFAIRES' MESSAGE ON THE TURKMEN PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY

¶18. (U) On June 20, the Turkmenistan edition of Turkish newspaper "Zaman-International" (Turkmen, circ. 34,100) carried an accurate message written by the U.S. Charge d'affaires which congratulated President Berdimuhamedov on the occasion of his birthday, and praised the growing relationship between Turkmenistan and the United States. (NOTE: Post submitted the text of the Charge's message to the newspaper upon the newspaper's request. END NOTE.)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT TURKMEN FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO USA

¶19. (U) On June 5, the "Watan" TV evening news program (Turkmen) accurately covered President Berdimuhamedov's instructions to Turkmen Foreign Minister Meredov for further intensification of ties with the United States. At that meeting, the President instructed

the Minister to go on an official visit to the United States and hold talks to improve cooperation. In subsequent days, Azeri news agency "Trend" (English), Russian "Praym-TASS - Novosti TEK" (Russian), pro-government website "Turkmenistan.ru" (Russian, English), "Agence France Presse" (English), "Kazakhstan Newsline" (English) and "Interfax: Central Asia General Newswire" (English) accurately reported on the upcoming visit with reference to state media reports.

¶10. (U) Stories carried by "Vremya Novostei" (Russian), "ABC.AZ Daily News" (English) and Azeri "Turan Information Agency" (English) on June 22-23 concluded the reason for Meredov's visit to the U.S. was to look for alternative sources of financial assistance for energy projects after failing to reach an agreement with the European Union, adding that the EU-Turkmenistan interim trade agreement requires transparency of Turkmenistan's gas-related incomes. On June 25, "Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty" (English) posted stories on the visit, assuming that it took place as a result of Russia's refusal to buy large quantities of Turkmen gas. On June 29, "WPS: Sentralno-aziatskie Novosti" (Russian) posted an accurate article on the visit, stating that Meredov is looking for ways to attract U.S. companies to invest in oil and gas projects in Turkmenistan.

¶11. (U) On June 25, the opposition website "Gundogar" (Russian) posted an accurate article on Meredov's meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State. The article accurately quoted State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly's comments regarding the meeting, and cited a letter from Human Rights Watch requesting Secretary Clinton to require Meredov to make progress on improving the human rights situation in Turkmenistan. The same day, pro-government website

ASHGABAT 00000851 003 OF 003

"Turkmenistan.ru" (Russian, English), "ITAR-TASS" (Russian) and "Fergana.ru" (Russian) highlighted Meredov's meeting with Secretary Clinton. "Turkmenistan.ru" and "ITAR-TASS" also highlighted Meredov's meeting with Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Morningstar, who positively evaluated Turkmenistan's perspectives in the energy sphere.

STATE PRINT OUTLETS CARRY INTERVIEW REMARKS BY U.S. EMBASSY INTERN WHILE AT INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION

¶12. (U) On June 29, the state-run daily "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 36,091) posted accurate interview remarks by Post intern Rachel Sosin, who was discussing the American booth at the "International Exhibition on National Renaissance and Masterpieces of World Art" held on June 26-28. The following day, state newspaper "Ashgabat" (Turkmen, circ. 23,091) also posted a similar interview with the intern. The interviews praised Turkmen culture and introduced some American artwork. However, the stories included fabricated statements praising Turkmen art and culture.

¶13. (SBU) COMMENT: During June, state media continued to favorably cover Post-organized events and USAID projects. However, in the beginning of the article on USAID's drop-in center for drug addicts, state print outlets and websites gave more credit to the Government of Turkmenistan in contributing to the event than to the United States. Foreign Minister Meredov's visit to the United States received generally accurate coverage, but limited access to information on the visit led to fabricated conclusions on the part of some international media outlets. The state daily interview with the Embassy intern at the International Exhibition of World Art Masterpieces incorrectly indicated the intern's title as a "Director of the Information and Cultural Department of U.S. Embassy", and it was mostly filled with (fabricated) words of praise for Turkmen art and culture, which in fact the intern did not say. END COMMENT.

MILES